

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore today applauded the decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to add fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to the list of acceptable nutritious foods that low-income mothers can buy to ensure their children's health through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). In December 2005, Congresswoman Moore sent a letter to USDA Secretary Michael Johanns urging him to add fresh fruit and vegetables to the WIC program, per the recommendations of a report released by the Institute of Medicine to update and improve the nutritional content of WIC food packages, which have not been changed in 30 years. The letter, co-signed by 47 Members of Congress, implored the USDA to expedite the adoption of a new WIC food package based on these recommendations that would allow more essential fruits and vegetables for these young children and their moms.

"This is a life-saving venture. Until now, fresh fruits and vegetables were not part of the WIC program's supplemental package, and were therefore out of reach to more than 8 million low-income program participants," said Congresswoman Moore. "Providing such nutritional foods as fruits and vegetables is not frivolous—it promotes overall health and growth in the short term, and teaches healthy habits and lowers the risk of disease and obesity in the long term."

The USDA's "2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans" recommends nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily, with higher or lower amounts based on caloric level. The guidelines cite that those who eat more generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke and other cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and cancer. Recent research also indicates that even mild under-nutrition experienced by young children during critical periods of growth may lead to reductions in physical growth and affect brain development.

Congresswoman Moore recently visited three schools in Wisconsin's Fourth District to communicate the importance of healthy eating to students. Kosciuszko Middle School and Forest Home Elementary School on Milwaukee's south side and Lakeview Elementary in South Milwaukee were selected to participate in the USDA's Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Snack program, which was recently expanded into six additional states, including Wisconsin. The program allows 13,500 school children in low-income areas to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables during their school day.

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